

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

TREASURY



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**Secretary Robert E. Rubin
Black Patriot Commemorative Coin Ceremony**

It is a pleasure to speak with you today. I'd like to thank Representatives Nancy Johnson, J.C. Watts, Donald Payne, and Charlie Rangel for attending today and for their efforts to pass the legislation to produce this coin. I'd also like to thank Mary Ellen Withrow for her leadership as Treasurer, Philip Diehl, Director of the Mint, for his leadership on this project, and the Black Patriots Foundation for their input.

This seems to me a most suitable place to celebrate the release of a coin that honors the contributions of African Americans in the Revolutionary War: the National Archives, the building that houses the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and so many of the vital documents of our history. For the release of this coin honors those African Americans who fought -- and died -- for the freedom that those documents embody, and one African American in particular, Crispus Attucks.

Crispus Attucks, an escaped slave, was the first person killed at the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770. Certainly one of the great paradoxes of American history is that the first American to die for the cause of freedom in our Revolution was an escaped slave. It took more than ninety years before slavery finally ended in this country, but the first steps for freedom had begun.

Later, more than 5,000 African Americans served in the Revolutionary War against the British, an essential fact in the history of the founding of this country that is too little known. I hope that by producing these coins, we will broaden recognition of the role of African Americans in the American Revolution. more broadly, by recognizing the role that all of our people play in our history, we gain a richer and fuller understanding of the American experience and we appreciate the contributions of all segments of our society to the American experience.
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I will now present the coins to Wayne Smith, the President of the Black Patriots Foundation, Ossie Davis, the distinguished actor, and co-Chairman of the Black Patriots Leadership Committee, and Michael Walker, an eight grade student at Terrell Junior High School. For those who can't see them clearly, on the front side of these coins there is an image of Crispus Attucks, on the reverse, which you can't see, there is an African American family of the Revolutionary War era, armed, and yearning for freedom. The first two framed boxes contain the coins along with stamps honoring four African Americans, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Benjamin Bennecker, and Salem Poor, a Revolutionary War patriot who distinguished himself at Bunker Hill. The box for Michael consists of a coin and a collage of highlights about Crispus Attucks and the Revolutionary War. Thank you very much.

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